

An Interactive Activity!

4 Complete Lessons!

Katherine Johnson Biography Writing Unit



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Thanks to [Prince Padania](#) for the clipart!



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Activity Description

This activity has been split into four separate lessons which will take students approximately 40-50 minutes each.

Lesson 1: Students need to cut out all the facts about Katherine Johnson and then organise them into the following paragraphs: Early Life & Family Life; Education & Early Career; NASA; and Retirement, Honours & Death. They then need to discuss how to order them.

Lesson 2: After ordering the facts, students then write up their paragraphs using these facts organised in the previous lesson. Remind students to use conjunctions and pronouns to make their writing more interesting. *They don't have to use all the facts!*

Lesson 3: Students will then have to write up their introduction and conclusion using the prompt sheets for planning. If they finish, they can start to check their work using a dictionary.

Lesson 4: Students will need to check any spelling errors with a dictionary, and then start their neat copy on the template provided. These will make a great classroom display!

If you would like to add another lesson, download my Katherine Johnson Reading Comprehension Activity too. This would give the students more background knowledge before they start writing the biography.

Link below:

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Katherine-Johnson-5th-Grade-6th-Grade-Close-Reading-Activity-6303601>

Task 1: Fact Sheet – please cut out all of the facts!

Katherine Johnson was born in 1918.

She graduated in 1937 with degrees in both mathematics and French.

In 1953 she accepted a job offer from NASA.

In 2015 President Barack Obama awarded Johnson the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Johnson died in 2020.

Johnson was born in Virginia.

She was just eighteen when she graduated from university.

Initially African-American women in her department worked in a separate area to their white peers.

Johnson was an American mathematician who worked for NASA.

Task 1: Fact Sheet – please cut out all of the facts!

Her complex calculations led to the success of the first human space flights.

She was the youngest of four children.

After university she took on a teaching job at a black public school in Virginia.

In 2016 she was portrayed by Taraji P. Henson as a lead character in the film, Hidden Figures.

She worked for NASA for 35 years.

Her mother was a teacher, and her father was a farmer and handyman.

With NASA she helped establish the use of computers to perform important mathematical tasks.

Johnson showed strong mathematical skills from an early age.

Johnson retired in 1986.

Task 1: Fact Sheet – please cut out all of the facts!

Johnson was one of the first African-American women to work as a NASA scientist.

Johnson was promoted and went on to work as an aerospace technologist.

Johnson's work included calculating the launch and flight for famous astronaut Alan Shepard.

She graduated from high school when she was just fourteen.

Alan Shephard was the first American in space

She also helped John Glenn, who was the first American in orbit.

She went on to work on the Apollo Lunar missions to the Moon.

In 1939 she married her first husband James Goble.

She left her teaching job and enrolled in a math program.

Task 1: Fact Sheet – please cut out all of the facts!

Johnson started in a career as a research mathematician.

Math research was a difficult field for African Americans and women to enter.

Katherine and James Goble had three daughters: Constance, Joylette and Katherine.

James Goble died of a brain tumor in 1956.

Katherine later married James Johnson and they were married for sixty years.

Task 2: Organising the Facts into Paragraphs – Part 1

Now organize the facts into the following paragraphs on your table:

- **Early Life & Family Life** (When was she born? Where was she born? What did her parents work as? How many siblings did she have? Who did she marry in 1939? How many children did they have? What happened in 1936? Who did she later marry?)
- **Education & Early Career** (What skills did she show from an early age? How old was she when she graduated from high school? How old was she when she graduated from university? What subjects did she graduate in? Where did she take on a teaching job? What did she do after teaching? Why was math research a difficult field for her to enter?)
- **NASA** (Where did she accept a job in 1953? What was she one of the first of when she started working for NASA? Why did some women have to work apart? What position was she promoted into? What did she help to establish with NASA? What did her calculations lead to? What famous astronauts did she help? What famous missions did she work on? How long did she work for NASA?)
- **Retirement, Honours & Death** (What year did she retire? What was she awarded in 2015 and by whom? How did she gain fame in 2016? What year did she die?)

Task 2: Organising the Facts into Paragraphs – Part 2

Now use the following pages to write up each paragraph; make sure you are using complete sentences and that the facts are ordered well.

Early Life & Family Life

Education & Early Career

Task 2: Organising the Facts into Paragraphs – Part 2

NASA

Retirement, Honours & Death

Task 3: Part 1 - Writing an Introduction

Below, write down what you think are the five most important facts:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

These facts are going to be part of your introduction!

Now, write a small paragraph introducing Katherine Johnson and remember to use the five facts above!

Task 3: Part 2 - Writing a Conclusion

Answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think a film was made about her life?
2. What may have been the most important moments in her life?
3. In your opinion why is Katherine Johnson such a great role model for so many people?

Use your answers above to write the conclusion for your biography of Katherine Johnson below:

Katherine Johnson - Biography



Katherine Johnson - Biography

[illegible]

Katherine Johnson - Biography

[illegible]

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